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The career development of recently qualified British South Asian women teachers: "Everybody's the same. I don't feel my ethnicity is an issue at all."

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This article reports on the final year of a four year research project into the influences on British South Asian women's choice of teaching as a career and on their subsequent career development. The research cohort was interviewed during their initial teacher training year on a PGCE (Post Graduate Certificate of Education) course in the English West Midlands, followed by subsequent interviews in the first and third years of their careers as teachers. Findings from the first phase of the research – into the reasons for selecting teaching as a career and issues faced during training – were previously published subsequent findings are captured in this article. Our research suggests that British South Asian women teachers at the start of their careers face, and largely cope with, broadly similar opportunities and challenges to other beginning teachers. Despite some particular tensions created by their work, family and community lives these teachers successfully established themselves as well respected individuals, fully capable of skilfully balancing their professional and personal commitments. Respondents did not report any particularly significant issues relating to their ethnic, cultural or religious affiliations, in contrast to the findings of a number of previous studies.

Keywords: British South Asian women; minority ethnic trainees; career and professional development; initial teacher education; discrimination

Introduction

Much of the research into the experiences of minority ethnic trainees on Initial Teacher Training (ITT) courses in the UK has emphasised the negative issues respondents reported during their training period (see Carrington et al. 2001; Clay, Gadhia, and Wilkins 2001; Osler 2003; Basit et al. 2006; Hoodless 2006). Other work has focussed on the under recruitment of potential teachers from minority ethnic populations, their higher withdrawal rates from training compared to White trainees, and the general limitations on their career choices (Archer 2002; Benn 2002; Gordon 2000; Basit et al. 2006). Taken together, such research presents an unedifying picture of the prospects for people from minority ethnic communities entering and succeeding in teaching.

Nonetheless, there is growing evidence that despite such barriers existing, the experience of many minority ethnic trainees and beginning teachers is essentially positive and often broadly comparable to that of their White peers. Farzana Shain

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(2000) and Fauzia Ahmad (2001), for example, have begun to question assumptions of the passivity, conservatism and lack of agency of British South Asian women with respect to their educational and career choices, highlighting their strengthening connections to the economic, cultural and religious structures of British society. Our own research has also highlighted the positive influences of family and culture on the choice of such women to enter teaching, with most viewing this career path as having high status and providing flexibility of lifestyle at the point of entry (Butt, MacKenzie, and Manning 2010). The majority of respondents were confident about their prospects and believed that they had been well prepared for their future careers by their university tutors and mentors in partnership schools. The research reported here, part of a longitudinal study started in 2006, tracks the experiences of a cohort of British South Asian[1] women (n = 12) at the end of their first and third years as teachers in state secondary schools. Each of these women originally trained to teach on a secondary PGCE (Post Graduate Certificate in Education) course at a university in the English West Midlands, which had traditionally experienced high recruitment, retention and completion rates for trainees from minority ethnic backgrounds.

Research design and methods

The aim of this research was to investigate the views of a sample of trainee teachers from minority ethnic communities about their choice of teaching as a career, the quality of training they experienced at a large metropolitan university in the West Midlands, and their subsequent progress as teachers in secondary schools at the end of their first and third years of teaching.

All minority ethnic trainees on the secondary PGCE course were informed of the aims, methods and procedures of the research by their method (subject) tutors during their training year (2006–7). Those wishing to take part (originally, n = 18) attended an orientation meeting, where the methods of enquiry, timeframe and ethical procedures were discussed. A total of four researchers conducted focus groups and one-to-one semi structured interviews with this self selected group of trainees, with the research eventually focussing on the responses of a cohort of 12 British South Asian women. This cohort is a selected sample from the 18 trainees who began the project in 2006. Whilst all respondents were interviewed in the first and second phases of the research a decision was made only to interview British Asian women for the final phase (Year 4). This was to enable a more focussed analysis of the career development of a distinct ethnic group from within the original self selected participants. The six teachers who were not interviewed in Year 4 were informed of the reasons for this decision and thanked for their previous participation in phases 1 and 2 of the research. During each of the research phases – phase 1: Initial Teacher Training (Research Year 1); phase 2: end of first year of teaching (Research Year 2); and phase 3: end of third year of teaching (Research Year 4) – individuals were shown the proposed questions before their interview and told that they could, if they wished, choose not to answer any question (see Appendix 1 and 2). Interviewees were also informed that they could subsequently read a transcript of their interview and edit anything they wished to alter, although none chose to do so. Interviews lasted, on average, about 45 minutes. Researchers were cognisant of the fact they were White and therefore members of a "dominant" ethnic group, a situation which Hoodless (2006), and others (Stanfield and Dennis 1993; Benn 2002; Fearfull and Kamenou 2006), believe may have a biasing effect on responses from minority

ethnic participants. However, no participants commented on any of the questions set, the way the research was conducted, the nature of the responses they made, or the subsequent analysis of the findings. Researchers were careful not to interview trainees they already knew, or had previously taught.

Interviews conducted in phase 1 of the research (initial training year) focussed on the trainees' selection of teaching as a career, issues faced during training and whether they thought that their membership of a minority ethnic group had any influence on either. Findings from this phase are reported elsewhere (see Butt, MacKenzie, and Manning 2010). The second and third sets of interviews (Newly Qualified Teacher [NQT] year, and third year of teaching) revisited some of the questions from phase 1, but with an emphasis on whether the respondents' original thoughts about choosing a career in teaching had substantially changed (see Appendix 1 and 2). Questions posed in these interviews moved the focus of the research towards considerations of the respondents' career development, whilst maintaining some of the initial themes (see, for example, Appendix 2, Question 6: "How do you now view teaching as a career, compared to when you were a trainee or an NQT?"). Given the researchers' decision to concentrate their analysis on the career development of the British South Asian women in the cohort, data gathered was considered particularly if it informed on this theme.

The geographical context of the research, in the West Midlands, is significant. The study is located in a large, multicultural city which is home to a substantial minority ethnic population – one third of the city's population was recorded as non-White in the 2001 Census. In schools the proportion of under 16s who are from White ethnic groups is significantly below the regional and national averages, with a quarter of the youth population being from an Asian ethnic group (compared to 1 in 9 regionally, and 1 in 15 nationally). The ethnic composition of pupils from the 12 schools in which respondents taught largely mirrors this distribution with 57% classified as "White" and 24% "Asian" (see Appendix 3). However, there is considerable variation in the ethnic mix of pupils within the study schools. In this article we have not attempted a fine grained analysis of the teachers' responses with reference to the ethnic composition of their schools, but simply indicated this percentage for the school in which they teach (School A, School B, etc). Preliminary analysis of the relationship between respondents' views and the ethnic composition of their school has not yielded any significant trends. Phillips (2006) reminds us that concentrations of minority ethnic populations in Britain's largest cities, often segregated from White communities, are regularly demonised as failing to integrate socially, culturally and economically. These areas are often "portrayed in negative terms … (as being) synonymous with high levels of social deprivation, poverty, drugs and crime" (Phillips 2006, 28); however such views fail to acknowledge the positive attributes of (predominantly) inner city areas as "vibrant social spaces, as lived spaces and as 'home'" (28). We have noted previously that "the experience of ethnic minority trainees in the West Midlands may be very different from those of trainees who attend training institutions, and who are placed in partnership schools, in predominantly White areas of England" (Butt, MacKenzie, and Manning 2010, 72). This point is borne out by Cole and Stuart (2005, 350), who report on the "endemic racism in local schools experienced by British Asian, Black and other minority ethnic trainee teachers teaching in 'all White' schools in the South East." By contrast, the trainee teachers involved in our initial research reported

experiencing very few racist incidents, with only one commenting on having received direct verbal racial abuse from a pupil during her period of training.

Findings

The findings reported here relate to interviews conducted with 12 British South Asian women teachers at the end of their NQT year (phase 2) and their third year of teaching (phase 3). In the following sections comments from particular respondents are identified by a pseudonym, a school letter, and a number – the latter to indicate the phase of the research in which their comment was made. For example, "Aalia, School A, 2" refers to a response made by a teacher in School A in the second phase of the research when they were an NQT, whilst "Shabana, School B, 3" is a comment made by a teacher in School B at the end of her third year of teaching. The final set of interviews revealed that all respondents still taught in state schools, although two had moved schools and three now worked in schools that had changed their status to that of Academies. The majority of interviewees remained in ethnically diverse, inner city schools. Most respondents were still positive about their initial decision to enter teaching, although some (n = 3) stated that they were aware of peers who had now become disillusioned with teaching, or who had already left the profession. "Career development" and "prospects for promotion" were themes that generated detailed responses from interviewees, particularly those who had accepted additional responsibilities in their schools and/or had registered on Masters courses with their original training institution (n = 4). Teaching was still viewed as a high status career choice which meshed well with their family and community lives, although some respondents questioned whether this situation would continue. Incidents of racial discrimination remained uncommon, although not unknown, within their school settings.

Balancing work, family and community lives

Previous research has highlighted the "high professional status of teachers and the acceptability of such a career path for women within their family and community" (Butt, MacKenzie, and Manning 2010, 73) for British South Asian women. Many trainee teachers commented positively about the perceived "fit" of a teaching career with their current, and prospective, family and community lives. Professional commitments might mean a degree of challenge and juggling of lifestyles, but this was considered achievable: as trainee teachers these women had reported that they believed teaching offered them an acceptable work-life balance. During our phase 2 (end of NQT year) interviews the close fit of a career in teaching with one's personal life was again regularly rehearsed, although with slightly less conviction than previously by some respondents. Reflecting on the currently stressful nature of her teaching job as an NQT, one British South Asian woman teacher had stated:

> I was under the impression that the holidays would compensate for it (the stress), but sometimes I think "No, it doesn't" . . . even when you're not working you find yourself very stressed and agitated and coming home and bringing those problems with you. . .I feel like my whole life is just totally different. Sometimes I feel like "Oh, my God!" You know, "My whole personality has changed" – I don't see my friends as much and feel my life's been taken over by teaching. (Aalia, School A, 2)

But when questioned as to whether these were issues particularly related to her minority ethnic status she commented:

> No, no. Everybody's the same. I don't feel my ethnicity is an issue at all. (Aalia, School A, 2)

Projecting forward, though, she could foresee potential problems of work-life balance in the future:

> I think Asian women are attracted to the job thinking that they have holidays and they finish early, but sometimes when I think about when I want to start a family, do I actually have the time? Although my school finishes at 3.10 … you see a lot of people working extremely hard doing all those things to get promotion, but then you think to yourself, you know, they're not actually having a life. Where do family fit in? (Aalia, School A, 2)

This comment was echoed by another respondent:

> I think teaching would be a good job to do part time. And don't get me wrong, I don't want to leave teaching yet, I do enjoy it but I do think it's something that can cause serious problems when you want to settle down and have children. Especially the fact that, you know, you are constantly stressed out and busy and there is a lot of pressure because you feel like you've got a million jobs to do all the time. (Shabana, School B, 2)

Reflecting on the demanding nature of the work of an NQT and on the changing conceptions of teaching as a career, both personally and in the Asian community, one teacher stated:

> It's definitely a bit more time consuming than I thought … well, my family thought, as they thought it's a 3.30 finish, you come home and that's it. Also a lot of Asian families are coming into teaching and seeing the classroom management side of it and this is getting filtered through to the older generation. So they're seeing how difficult today's children can be and that it's a more challenging career, perhaps rewarded with not enough money. (Faiza, School C, 2)

A fourth respondent asserted that although attitudes towards teaching were broadly positive in her community, particularly as a career for women, in-grained views still persisted amongst some:

> This is very dated, and it has changed, but there is a sexist approach that girls can only do certain jobs and lads can do the better jobs – they get pushed. With some families, who struggle to be westernised or to integrate, it is unfortunately still the attitude that girls stay at home and cook, boys go out – go and play football; he can go out with the lads, no problem. I still have (female) friends, at the age of 27, who still have to lie to their parents. (Zainab, School D, 2)

When interviewed towards the end of their third year of teaching most (n = 8) felt that they had the balance between their personal and professional lives about right, with particular routines and strategies being adopted to cope with the inevitable pressures. Asked about perceptions of her future career development, juxtaposed by her recent marriage and the possibilities of raising a family, one respondent commented:

> When you are Asian, by a certain age it will be said you've got to get married, but you have got to think about your personal life as well. You should go for whatever career you think won't affect it. You have to think "what will our family want from us? What will they expect of us?" And teaching does fit in quite well with that. I mean you can work around the commitments we have at home and then juggle what we have at school as well and I think sometimes with other jobs you can't do that. (Hema, School E, 3)

However, other teachers were rather more pessimistic:

> I don't think you could have a family realistically and stay at my school, well, not for very long … I don't think that I could have kids and teach at this school because I do take a lot of work home still. It depends on what time of year it is as well, but I teach an applied course so I have lots of coursework to mark all the time and you can't get it done in school, no way, there's just not enough time. (Jasmina, School F, 3)

> I think the real challenge for me is if I do get married and start having kids. That will be the real challenge, finding that balance… Once you get married I think it's just like "Oooh! What do you need your career for?" It's one of those attitudes, so … we shall see! (Sarbjeet, School G, 3)

Career and professional development

By their third year of teaching the majority of British South Asian women had experienced appropriate professional development and many had been offered, and accepted, additional professional responsibilities. Only one respondent had refused such an enhancement, on the grounds that she wished to preserve what she saw as a favourable work-life balance. In the final year of this study 4 out of 12 respondents had also registered to complete a Masters degree in education. There was significant evidence, from these teachers' responses, of consideration of their future career development and professional prospects – sometimes with direct reference to their ethnicity.

One respondent, as an NQT, intimated that the presence of a Black headmaster in her school had shaped the racial composition of the Senior Management Team (SMT) and had influenced the career advancement of teachers from minority ethnic backgrounds:

> At this school, because it's so mixed, it's really nice. And not just that but, like, the Headmaster who is a Black guy …I think that's a really positive thing because there's lots of people in leadership who are not just, like, White male, if you know what I mean. Since he has come in there's been a lot more people from ethnic minorities, like, recruited from within the school. (Jasmina, School F, 2)

When questioned as to whether she believed this was an active policy of positive discrimination adopted by the Headmaster, she reflected on her imminent move to another school and the interviews recently held for her replacement:

> The person who will replace me is a White girl, so they probably didn't do it (adopt a policy of positive discrimination) … because at the interview there were other people from, like, my background there and they chose her over them, so I don't think there is to be honest. (Jasmina, School F, 2)

Certainly no other respondents believed that such positive discrimination occurred within their schools, or agreed with such policies as a matter of principle.

Another teacher, who had already taken on a range of additional responsibilities including co-writing the behavioural policy for her school and helping with staff induction, considered herself to be someone the SMT and her head of department were very willing to approach with career development opportunities. Commenting on the imminent retirement of her departmental head she stated:

> (Its) what I have been aiming for. I always put it in my Five Year Plan, like Stalin! I feel ready for it now and am quite privileged that the head of department for 16 years feels confident enough to put me forward as well. (Hema, School E, 3)

Reflecting on her choice of teaching as a career, another respondent believed that what had originally attracted her to the profession still held true at the end of her NQT year and into her third year of teaching, although she had also recognised opportunities for career advancement beyond the UK:

> Basically the flexibility of teaching, having holidays, at suitable times – later on in life, when I do have a family, it'll be the ideal situation. I think that's also from an ethnic minority point of view because I come from a big Asian family, so that would fit in nicely, I think, teaching and having a family life. Also it's like a gateway to progress up as well – you can use the teaching qualification abroad, not just in England, you can take that qualification elsewhere around the world and use it. (Faiza, School C, 3)

Three respondents made particular mention of their positions as role models:

> I want to be an inspiration and a role model for women, number one, but also for Muslim and practising Muslim women in the local area. (Sukhdeep, School H, 2)

> I feel like I am their (the pupils') role model and they really look up to me. It's the exact same thing in the community – I feel like since becoming a teacher my opinions are more valued and people look up to me for how to do certain things, not just people younger than me people older than me as well. (Hema, School E, 2)

> You do represent something like a role model for some kids. (Zubaidah, School I, 3)

The majority of British South Asian women interviewed (n = 10) reported that they did not regret their decision to enter teaching and believed that it remained a good career choice – although those who had moved schools within the study period acknowledged that the type of school one worked in could make a considerable difference to one's enjoyment of working life. In the case of a teacher whose school had recently entered special measures – where the school's management strategy was openly questioned and where pupils' behaviour was challenging – the decision to enter teaching had been reconsidered: "I resent coming into teaching for the fact that it has taken my life away from me" (Halima, School J, 3). However, the interview eventually revealed that her choice of school was the major problem, not the career itself.

Discrimination

Reported incidents of discrimination were very low throughout the study (n = 3), with some teachers stating that they had never faced any form of prejudice. In the few cases that interviewees discussed they were uniformly reassured by the action of their schools, which took direct, immediate, and assertive action to resolve the issue. When pressed about any incidents of discrimination in school, one respondent commented:

> The way our behaviour policy is it really does not tolerate any sort of discrimination and it is dealt with quite severely. So I think our pupils are aware of that as well, so it's not really a common issue within our school. (Nazahah, School K, 3)

Another teacher, as an NQT, had experienced abuse from a Year 11 group in her "predominantly White" school – a group which was well known for its challenging behaviour after the school had entered "special measures" three years earlier. Reassuringly, the senior management team had acted swiftly and decisively with respect to incidents of discrimination:

> They were very strong, as long as I reported it. They just excluded them (the pupils) if it was racial, so they were very supportive. (Shaheera, School L, 2)

However, for one teacher working in very challenging circumstances bullying by senior managers was a major issue:

> I just feel there is no support at all … you are treated like a kid, you're shouted at, you are patronised. (Halima, School J, 3)

When asked whether there was ever a racial element to this bullying, and whether this might have impacted on her recently failed application for promotion, the answer was not entirely unequivocal:

> It does feel very unfair; I don't think it was racial – but it's a very unfair place. (Halima, School J, 3)

Discussion

We return to the work of Rana et al. (1998), whose investigation of British South Asian women's lives as professional workers and managers revealed the tensions faced in balancing their domestic and working lives. Their analysis focussed on five factors – cultural influences on domestic responsibilities, commitments to extended family and community, balancing of work and family priorities, stereotypes of work roles and responsibilities, and experience of discrimination – which we have chosen to consider in our previous section under the headings of Balancing work, family and community lives, Career and professional development, and Discrimination. Whilst these headings do not translate exactly onto Rana et al.'s (1998) chosen factors for analysis, there is clearly a degree of correspondence. The interview questions we posed were not designed to replicate Rana et al.'s previous work: for example we did not seek to find evidence of "cultural influences on domestic responsibilities", but of how respondents' choice of teaching as a career affected their domestic lives within their particular cultural setting. Similarly, by conducting

a study only of *teachers* we were not concerned with the "work roles and responsibilities" of other jobs – jobs which might be considered to be stereotypes of the employment of British South Asian women. We did not find evidence of either a struggle for acceptance in the workplace or of the restriction of career progress for British South Asian women in teaching – in contrast to the findings of Fearfull and Kamenou (2006) and Rana et al. (1998) for other professions. Nonetheless, we were aware that the loosening of cultural ties which has enabled many British South Asian women to access the wider employment market still sits in tension with expectations of their traditional family, community and domestic roles (see Dosanjh and Ghuman 1998; Ghuman 2002; Jawad and Benn 2003). This point is taken further by Fearfull and Kamenou (2006), who recognise that issues of acceptance in the workplace and career progression may be factors that many women face.

As trainee teachers, and also at the culmination of their first year in teaching, respondents occasionally commented on their concerns about future promotion prospects. Some (n = 4) noted seeing "only a few members of ethnic minority groups in the senior management teams of their partnership schools" (Butt, MacKenzie, and Manning 2010, 80), regardless of whether they were placed in an "all White" or an ethnically mixed school. Their fears about advancement seem to have largely proved unfounded, evidenced by the positive comments made by interviewees on the career development opportunities they had already experienced or had witnessed by the end of their third year of teaching. However, Saeeda Shah (2006), commenting on Islamic perspectives of educational leadership, acknowledges the current gap in research literature regarding theorizations and conceptions of leadership roles amongst British Asian teachers and pupils. This is an issue which future research will need to address.

Some respondents (n = 5) raised concerns about whether combining their home and professional lives would be sustainable, especially if they achieved promotion, due to the necessity of combining two separate, stressful existences – something Thomas and Aldefer (1989) have referred to as "bi cultural stress" (189). This point is taken further by Stuart Hall when he argues that diasporic communities "must learn to inhabit two identities, to speak two cultural languages, to translate and negotiate between them" (Hall 1992, 310). In her study of young British South Asian women in Hertfordshire, Dwyer (2000) has noted that few women had a fixed or static notion of their identity, rather negotiating and transforming identities according to particular circumstances – whilst recognising their compound identities as being both British *and* Asian (something Modood and May [2001] and Modood [2005] refer to as "hyphenated" or "multiple identities"). During the first two phases of our research there was some evidence of British South Asian women altering their existing cultural mores, as part of the process of adopting significant new professional identities and practices as teachers. The subtleties of such changes may reflect our cohort's slightly older age range (from 22 to 27 years, compared to Dwyer's 16 to 18 year olds), by which stage alterations of cultural, religious and family norms may have already occurred. There may also be class and caste factors at play – with Dwyer's study identifying the stronger influences of traditional, restrictive cultural practices amongst working class British Asian women (Dwyer 2008).

The extent to which the pressures felt by British South Asian women entrants to the teaching profession are particular to that group, or simply a reflection of the pressures that *all* beginning teachers face, is questionable. Many respondents (n = 7) in their first and third years of teaching believed that the job was not quite what they

originally thought, and that the commitments demanded of them as teachers were considerable given the pay they received (n = 2). However, few respondents felt that these pressures were particularly related to their minority ethnic status, believing that what they faced was the common experience of all beginning teachers.

Kalwant Bhopal's (2000) work on British South Asian women's participation in "arranged marriages" recognises how levels of female educational attainment correlate with their employment participation rates. Here, well educated women are choosing to become more independent of their cultural, community and family influences, are less likely to agree to their involvement in an arranged marriage, and are often shifting their identities as British Asian women:

> As Asian women are able to move in and out of different forms of identity, their identities are changing and multifaceted, enabling them to reinforce one particular mode or form of that individual identity. (48)

This is something Ahmad (2001) refers to as women "continually negotiating and renegotiating their cultural, religious and personal identities", processes which she observes "operate in complex and sometimes contradictory ways" (137). High educational achievement[2], which is a given with respect to any cohort of recently trained teachers in a degree level entry profession, has encouraged independence and a shift amongst younger generation British South Asian women towards professional employment. Indeed, in contrast to the findings of Shaw (1994):

> Some women are openly rejecting aspects of South Asian traditions in favour of other British ones. These women define their own sense of being, they accept their British-born identity and feel they *have the choice* (emphasis in original) to reject the traditions of their ancestors. They recognise the status and opportunities that educational advancement brings. They also recognise that change is an inevitable process for British-born South Asian women. (Bhopal 2000, 46)

Conclusions

Our research suggests that, in most respects, British South Asian women teachers at the start of their careers face similar opportunities and challenges to other beginning teachers – although we acknowledge that our findings may be influenced by geographical location. Despite particular tensions created by family and community mores these teachers in the West Midlands have largely established themselves as well respected, autonomous, individuals who are successfully balancing their professional and personal lives. Previous research has recognised the division between "British society's norms of individualism, secularism and gender equality and the tendency of British South Asian communities towards collectivism, religious observance and gender discrimination" (Butt, MacKenzie, and Manning 2010, 79; see also Carrington et al. 2001). However, this cohort of new teachers appeared more than capable of successfully negotiating such tensions.

One of the most striking findings of this longitudinal study is that individually, and collectively, there appears to be little indication of our respondents significantly changing their opinions. When compared to the responses they made in phase 1, the attitudes of these British South Asian women teachers had hardly changed over four years: teaching was still viewed as a high status career choice by the individual, their family and community; it was perceived as a profession which generally fitted well with family life; there was a continuing realisation that

a teaching job required a certain amount of "juggling" of personal, religious, family and community commitments and identities – but that for most Asian women the profession offered an acceptable work-life balance (see Butt, MacKenzie, and Manning 2010). We particularly focussed on these teachers' perceptions of their future career prospects, first expressed when they were trainees in phase 1. At this point concerns were raised about the small number of senior managers they had seen who were from minority ethnic groups – as a consequence these beginning teachers feared that their own career development might be modest. There was little evidence of this in the final phase of the research. Despite their continuing awareness of career influencing factors arising from their family, religious, cultural and community lives – some of which they acknowledged as potentially negative – there appeared to be few restrictions on the career advancement of this cohort of British South Asian women teachers. We previously speculated that during their initial training and NQT stages these teachers would be largely shielded from issues that might affect their career development, largely because they were being mentored, and nurtured, by supportive colleagues. Once this phase ended it was felt that career development and advancement might become more problematic. However, our findings reveal little support for this assertion – with respondents often reporting positively on their projected career paths. This group of British South Asian women teachers gave few suggestions that they have, as yet, either abandoned, denied or significantly altered their values and identities to achieve career advancement (in direct contrast to the findings of Fearfull and Kamenou [2006], amongst minority ethnic accountants).

Interestingly, Dwyer (2000) has noted the "gendered expectations of young women as the guardians of cultural and religious integrity" (477), whilst also recognising that many of the British South Asian women she interviewed wanted to challenge assumptions of their passivity in the face of oppressive parents, unhappy arranged marriages and powerless lives. The notion of minority ethnic women being judged as representatives of a *group*, rather than as diverse *individuals*, was also questioned in Dwyer's study. Through our research we have seen how individuals in a small cohort of British South Asian women teachers are successfully managing their "hyphenated" identities, by skilfully prioritising different aspects of their compound lives according to their circumstances. On this evidence the negative experiences endured by the first cohort of Asian teachers who worked in the UK in the 1960s (see Singh Ghuman 1995) – who often faced poor career advancement and open prejudice – appears largely to have been averted by recently qualified British South Asian women teaching in schools in the West Midlands.

Notes

1. Here the term "British South Asian" is used to describe women of Asian Indian, Asian Bangladeshi and Asian Pakistani origin. Unlike some other, often larger scale, research (see Modood et al. 1997; Modood and May 2001) we have not sought to differentiate our cohort into discrete national origins, given that our small number of respondents would make meaningful analysis on this basis problematic.
2. Joanna Lindley (2009), in her analysis of the Quarterly Labour Force Survey (1993–2003), notes that women from South Asian backgrounds are more likely to be classified as "overeducated" with reference to the scale of earnings, particularly when compared to other immigrant and native groups who also hold UK qualifications.

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Appendix 1. British South Asian women teachers: interview questions posed at the end of their NQT year in teaching

1. What are the main factors that originally attracted you to a career in teaching? Has your consideration of those factors now changed?
2. Reflecting back on your training, were there any aspects that should have taken greater account of your being from a minority ethnic group?
3. Have your attitudes to teaching changed in any ways since taking up your post in this school? How do you see your career progressing?
4. What have been your greatest successes and challenges since starting teaching in this school?
5. What advice would you give a person from a minority ethnic group about to enter a career in teaching?
6. What advice would you give the government and initial teacher education (ITE) institutions about persons from minority ethnic groups entering a career in teaching?

Appendix 2. British South Asian women teachers: interview questions posed at the end of their third year in teaching

1. Could you remind me of the type of school you teach in? (State comprehensive? Size? Catchment? Ethnic mix? Turnover of staff? "High achieving"?)
2. What would you say are the most significant changes in your working life since your NQT year?
3. How do you currently find balancing your working life with your life within your family and community? Have there been any major changes in your priorities in the last three years?
4. Do you feel that you have experienced any discrimination in your working life? What form did this take? Was it dealt with satisfactorily?
5. Have you been engaged in any significant professional development in the past three years? Have you registered for a Masters qualification? Has any of your professional development made a real change to your working life?
6. How do you now view teaching as a career, compared to when you were a trainee or an NQT?
7. Any other points?

Appendix 3. Ethnic composition of pupil populations in study schools (percentage %).

School	White	Black	Asian	Mixed	Other	Unclassified
A	23	7	38	30	1	1
B	72	6	14	7	1	0
C	67	7	20	6	0	0
D	72	5	9	9	3	2
E	52	5	32	8	2	1
F	23	2	64	7	4	0
G	13	4	38	35	9	1
H	81	5	9	4	1	0
I	51	7	26	15	1	0
J	68	3	26	3	0	0
K	81	3	9	6	1	0
L	82	2	13	1	0	2
Average	57	5	24	11	2	1

Source: Annual Schools' Census 2010 (adapted).
Note: White includes: White British; White Irish; Other White background.
Black includes: Black or Black British Caribbean; Black or Black British African; Other Black background.
Asian includes: Asian or Asian British Indian; Asian or Asian British Pakistani; Asian or Asian British Bangladeshi; Chinese; Other Asian background.
Mixed includes: Mixed – White and Black Caribbean; Mixed – White and Black African; Mixed – White and Asian; Other Mixed background.
Other includes: Other Ethnic background.
Unclassified includes: Not Known; Information refused.